



# Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, Inc.

A LIVING MEMORIAL THROUGH EDUCATION

February 19, 2009

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The Honorable Charlie Crist  
Governor, State of Florida  
The Capitol  
400 S. Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Governor Crist:

This letter is about our dire State-of-Emergency at the Holocaust Documentation and Educational Center, which is a not-for-profit, non-denominational institution representing the second largest Holocaust Survivor population in the United States as well as hundreds of volunteers and an incredibly devoted staff of six. For almost three decades, we have devoted our efforts and goals to teach Florida teachers and students the evils and dangers of hatred and bigotry.

Although we are not "the glitz and the blitz," we have made tremendous strides in our attempt to endow our community with A Legacy of Remembrance. We have helped other Holocaust centers' programs, initiatives, and efforts around the world get started and focused. After all these years, we understood the importance of ensuring our future, and so, we purchased a building in which we will create the first South Florida Holocaust Museum. The funding sources which we had previously received from the state became unavailable to us, and this year, it seems that wherever we turn - to our state, the foundations, corporations, and individuals, we hit walls.

I am a daughter of a Holocaust Survivor, and I started out at the Center 28 years ago as a volunteer and today serve as its Director. Never did I think almost three decades later, while in the midst of initial construction of the first South Florida Holocaust Museum, we would be facing possible foreclosure. Never did I think that we would have to tell our Survivors that we can't keep our promise to **Remember**. They not only waited all these years, they gave us their thousands of hours of eyewitness testimony including that of my late and beloved father. They gave us their precious photographs, documents, and artifacts from before and during the Holocaust - in many cases, the only remaining remnants or items from their families who perished in the Holocaust. Now what do we give them?

Acquiring the desperately needed funding through a stimulus package earmarked for the Center would mean that our volunteers, most of whom are elderly, and, of course, our extraordinary Survivors of the Holocaust would continue to have a home, a place to go to that would give meaning and purpose to their lives. It would keep our staff working and give curators, media specialists, IT persons, plumbers, electricians, general contractors, roofers, carpenters, security and maintenance personnel, window, door, and carpet specialists, and service people such as insurers and everyone else that is needed to build and run the Museum **a job and a future**. In addition, the surrounding restaurants and businesses would benefit from all those involved. Students, teachers, school bus drivers, including the community within and beyond as well as tourists, would benefit.

Located at: 2031 Harrison Street, Hollywood, Florida 33020 Telephone: (954) 929-5690 Fax: (954) 929-5635 Email: [info@hdec.org](mailto:info@hdec.org) Website: [www.hdec.org](http://www.hdec.org)

A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Division of Consumer Services by calling toll free: 1-800-435-7352 within the state. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval of recommendation by the state.

The Honorable Charlie Crist  
February 19, 2009  
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In the Economic Stimulus Spreadsheet, it appears that we easily could fit, for example, either into the Corps of Engineers Construction where funds may only be used for previously funded projects: priority to projects or elements of projects that can be funded within two years and are labor intensive, which we are, or with the HUD Neighborhood Stabilization Program which is a competitive grant program for states, units of general local government, and non-profits, that are "shovel ready," which we are. We are sure that there may be even better suited areas as well.

Perhaps we could become a pilot program through one of the state's community/city based stimulus packages. Yes, we have drawings and, yes, we are "shovel ready" and, yes, we have chosen the nationally renowned museum design firm Gallagher & Associates, based out of Bethesda, Maryland, which has a wonderful reputation. We are currently in the midst of planning.

Attached please find our Case Statement explaining the need for this Museum which we know is needed today more than ever before. We need to see change and we need to see that the Survivor's past will **Never Again** become our grandchildren's and, I mean all our grandchildren's future.

Since we are the gateway to Latin America, the Museum will be the first in the country to tell the story of the Holocaust in English and Spanish.

As you may remember when you were Commissioner of Education, I was honored when you reappointed me to serve as the Chair of the Commissioner of Education's Task Force on Holocaust Education – a position I was privileged to represent for 9 ½ years.

For almost three decades, we at the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center have studied, taught, and grappled with the intensity and horror of the Holocaust. We have been haunted and taunted by every one of our 2,200 eyewitness testimonies.

They have seared our hearts and searched our souls and yet, their voices continue and must continue to be the moral voice of conscience in the face of evil. Their message beseeches us to find in our diversity our common humanity. They implore us to teach the Holocaust – not repeat it – not in Bosnia, Rwanda, Herzegovina, or Darfur. The Holocaust teaches us that knowledge divorced from values can once again resurrect "The Kingdom of the Night" because a head without a heart is not humanity and promises of **Never Again** are empty and meaningless if we remain silent and indifferent.

My father, who was a Survivor of the Holocaust and who recently passed away, always told me, "Rositta, as long as there is someone to tell the story, there is life and as long as there is someone to listen, there is hope, and the story will live on."

Governor Crist, please help us to continue to tell the story so that our children and grandchildren will remember and the story will live on.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rositta E. Kenigsberg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rositta E. Kenigsberg  
Executive Vice President

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